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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASMARA 000632

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LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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SUBJECT: PFDJ SUDAN NEGOTIATOR DEBRIEFS ON TRIPOLI
MEETINGS; ESPA UPDATE

REF: ASMARA 600

Classified By: CDA Jennifer A. McIntyre, for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

11. (C) Summary. On July 19, Charge met with People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) Political Chief and Sudan negotiator Yemane Ghebreab to ascertain Eritrean views on the July 15-16 Tripoli meetings on Darfur. Ghebreab described the outcome of the conference as positive. While clearly not enthusiastic about the venue of Arusha for the upcoming non-signatories conference, he affirmed that either he or fellow PFDJ negotiator Abdella Jabir planned to attend, as well as representatives of all five parties comprising the newly formed United Front for Liberation and Development (UFLD) umbrella group in Asmara. Ghebreab also provided Charge with a status report on the implementation of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA). End Summary.

Ghebreab Debriefs on Tripoli Conference

12. (C) Ghebreab told Charge that the main goal of converging the UN/AU and regional initiatives at the Tripoli conference had been achieved and practical matters about next steps can now be addressed. Acknowledging that Arusha was not Eritrea's preferred choice of venue for the non-signatory conference, Ghebreab said that nonetheless, the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) "could work with" this venue and either he and/or Abdella Jabir would attend. Ghebreab added that he believed representatives from each of the five non-signatory groups (SLM/A, SLA/M, NRFF, NMRD and SFDA) comprising the newly formed UFLD umbrella group in Asmara would also attend the Arusha conference. He emphasized the need for the international community to elicit active participation from the Sudan's People Liberation Front (SPLM) in this meeting as well.

13. (C) Ghebreab confirmed that he had met with SE Natsios while in Tripoli and that Natsios had assured him that the U.S. was willing to engage with the GSE on Darfur initiatives under the UN/AU framework. Charge asked whether Ghebreab felt there were any divergences in views on next steps between the U.S. and GSE. Ghebreab said no, noting that the Eritrean and U.S. positions were "fairly close".

And Provides Status of ESPA Implementation

¶4. (C) Charge inquired about a July 18 news article reporting on a meeting in Asmara concerning the integration of the military in Eastern Sudan, and requested an update on the implementation of other ESPA provisions. Ghebreab said that the Eastern militia integrations were "in the initial stages". The Government of Sudan was proceeding with classifying Eastern militia members into those who would be demobilized and those who would join the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). A Joint Military Commission comprised of the GSE, the Government of Sudan (GOS), and leaders of the Sudanese military would then oversee the training of those members slotted to join the SAF. He predicted that the whole integration process would be completed within nine months.

¶5. (C) On the issue of political power-sharing, Ghebreab noted that President Bashir had approved already the Eastern Front's political appointments to the Cabinet, the parliament, and positions in the three Eastern states - but as of yet, "nobody was sitting at a desk working". He added that the Eastern Front was currently engaged internally, developing a leadership executive of 20-25 people to direct the political organization before taking up their posts.

¶6. (C) Ghebreab concluded by stating that the mechanism for implementing the wealth-sharing and national development provisions had been established. The committee will be chaired by Sudan's Minister of Finance and co-chaired by an Eastern Front member (not identified by Ghebreab). Although the committee had not yet started the formal process, projects were being discussed and the budget was in place. Ghebreab expected the committee to start work by mid-August.

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He added that the wealth-sharing committee would not include Eritrean representation, but the GSE would be available to assist in mediating disputes.

¶7. (C) Comment: While post was encouraged that Ghebreab agreed to meet with us after his return to Asmara, he provided only the most general information about his impressions of the Tripoli meetings. He also included another plug for a greater SPLM role in the mediation process. We were particularly interested in Ghebreab's comments on whether the GSE and UPLF planned to attend the Arusha conference. The Norwegian Ambassador in Asmara had informed Charge earlier that he had heard from first-hand sources that the Eritrean delegation had been very unhappy with the Arusha venue at the Tripoli meetings. In fact, Ghebreab had even threatened that the GSE would not attend. The Norwegian Ambassador added that the GSE had favored N'djamena as the non-signatories conference venue (a fact confirmed by Ghebreab), a location where the GSE presumably would have greater influence over the process and actors. However, Ghebreab showed no evidence in his meeting with Charge of equivocating on either GSE or UPLF attendance in Arusha. Post notes that the UN/AU mediators may have had lingering doubts following Tripoli - we learned that UN Special Advisor Pekka Haavisto traveled to Asmara on July 29, meeting with Ghebreab and the UPLF, reportedly to reinforce their commitment to attend Arusha.

¶8. (C) Comment, cont.: Ghebreab was reticent in his comments on ESPA implementation. According to him, implementation is proceeding. However, in keeping with reports from other observers, progress clearly is slow and lacks momentum. End Comment.
MCINTYRE